

among several lenders, negotiating, and resisting, indeed refusing to yield to, pressure to sign any loan papers they don't understand. Nonprofit credit and housing counseling services are available to help consumers manage their credit and make decisions about loans and loan terms.

To help protect consumers, the Federal Trade Commission, the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators, the U.S. Postal Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the National Association of Attorneys General, the Department of Justice, and private consumer organizations have joined forces to inform Americans about their rights as borrowers, about the responsibilities of lenders, and about protecting their assets. This information is available in writing, by telephone, and online.

I encourage all Americans to take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about how to protect themselves against fraudulent and abusive lending practices. By becoming wise and well-informed consumers, we can reduce the incidence of fraud and deception in the marketplace.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 5 through February 10, 2001, as National Consumer Protection Week. I call upon government officials, industry leaders, consumer advocates, the media, and the American people to participate in programs helping citizens to be responsible and wise consumers.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:47 a.m., February 7, 2001]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on February 8.

## **Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada and an Exchange With Reporters**

*February 5, 2001*

**President Bush.** It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of our closest friend to the White House. This is the first visitor I have received since I've been the President. We've just had a very good visit. We talked about a lot of subjects, and I confirmed to the Prime Minister that America appreciates our friendship, appreciates our trading partner. We share a long border, and it's been a peaceful border.

I assured him that we will consult and keep him abreast of decisions that we make here that will affect Canada and peace in the world. And I look forward to not only reaffirming our friendship with the country; I look forward to developing a friendship with this good man right here. So it's an honor to welcome you here, sir.

**Prime Minister Chretien.** Thank you very much, Mr. President. For me, it's a great pleasure to be the first foreign leader to come and visit with you. But we feel it's a kind of a cousin coming to visit, because you know, we are two neighbors for so long, 4,000 miles of border, with no problems, big problems. Whenever they were our problems, we can talk, consult, and try to find an acceptable solution.

So I can tell the press that it was a very friendly meeting and a very productive meeting. We covered a lot of areas and look forward for a very good period with President Bush. On behalf of the Canadians, I want to wish you the best luck in your job. You're at the beginning, and I know that you will be successful. And when you need us, we'll be there, and we hope that when we need you, you will be there.

**President Bush.** Thank you, sir.

**Prime Minister Chretien.** Mr. President, if you will allow me in French, now, we had a very good meeting. This is the first time that I had a state visit—President Bush. We talked about many, many issues. We talked about our bilateral relations. We talked about other leaders and other people, and I think

that the beginning of our personal relationship is a very good one.

### **Canada-U.S. Relations**

**Q.** Mr. President, what issue do you think will be the one that will be the biggest test of the leadership in the next 6 months?

**President Bush.** For me as the President, in regards to Canada?

**Q.** Yes.

**President Bush.** Convincing Congress to promote free trade throughout our hemisphere. A free trading hemisphere is going to benefit Canada and will benefit the United States, and we've got a lot of work to do—for me to do—to get fast-track negotiating authority.

We're going to have a summit in Quebec, and I'm looking forward to being hosted by the Prime Minister, here, and the whole notion is to promote free trade and open markets around the hemisphere.

### **Mexico, Canada, and the U.S.**

**Q.** Mr. President, there is an impression that you might prefer Mexico over Canada. Do you have a preference for either country?

**President Bush.** I've got a preference for friends. And the Canadians are longstanding friends of the United States. Mexico is an important country, as well, and I look forward to a meeting with President Fox in a couple of weeks. My preference is for friendly relations in our hemisphere.

I want the people of my country to understand that a foreign policy priority of my administration will be this hemisphere. And it's so important for the United States not to neglect the hemisphere. My first meeting is with the Prime Minister. Shortly thereafter, I'll be meeting with the President of Mexico. And we have great opportunities in this hemisphere to spread prosperity throughout. And it's going to be to our nations' mutual benefit when that happens.

### **2000 Presidential Election**

**Q.** Mr. President, what did you think of the Prime Minister's comments and those by the former Ambassador here last year that left the impression Canada might have felt

it would have been easier to work with Al Gore than with you?

**President Bush.** I didn't pay attention to it if he said that. I'm going to prove him wrong. But as for our discussions today, I didn't have any impression whatsoever that the Prime Minister came with any preconceived notion except one thing—that I will promote friendly relations with Canada.

### **Canada-U.S. Relations**

**Q.** Mr. Prime Minister, considering your good relations that you had with President Clinton plus what you said in 1993 about relations with President Bush, first President Bush and then Prime Minister Mulroney, how do you expect your relations with President George W. Bush to be?

**Prime Minister Chretien.** Our relations will be very good. President Bush is the President of the United States. I'm the Prime Minister of Canada. We have common interests. We'll have different interests, and as we said before, it's very good to have these relations, and it's very good that Canada be seen as an independent country.

**President Bush.** Hold on. I've got a very important answer to give. The question was fishing. [Laughter] We talked about fishing, and I would hope someday to be able to go catch small-mouthed bass on the Prime Minister's—as he called it, the equivalent of Camp David. I could use a few techniques when it comes to fishing for small-mouthed bass. And one day, if all works out well, he can come down and catch large-mouthed bass on my ranch. [Laughter]

**Q.** Golf? Any plans to play golf together?

**President Bush.** If he gives me enough strokes. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico and former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada. After the Prime Minister's opening remarks, he spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

**Message to the Congress  
Transmitting a Report on the  
Operation of the Andean Trade  
Preference Act**

*February 5, 2001*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

As required by section 203(f) of the Andean Trade Preference Act (APTA) of 1991, as amended (19 U.S.C. 3201 *et seq.*), I transmit herewith the third report to the Congress on the Operation of the Andean Trade Preference Act.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
February 5, 2001.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 6.

**Remarks at Tree Top Toys & Books  
and an Exchange With Reporters in  
McLean, Virginia**

*February 6, 2001*

**The President.** I am honored to be here, Carole. Thank you very much. Next time my mother shops, I am going to tell her to double the amount of purchases. [Laughter] I want to thank the other small-business owners who are here as well.

One of the unique things about America is the entrepreneurial spirit of our country. The small-business owner is really the backbone of the Nation in terms of job creation, in terms of hope, in terms of offering dreams for people. I am here to talk to these entrepreneurs about the benefits of the tax relief package, the benefits for the small-business owner.

First, we'll make the code simpler, consolidate the rates from five to four. By dropping the top rate from nearly 40 percent to 33 percent, we really say to the sole proprietor, the business owner, that there is more capital available for you to expand your business if need be, your own money in your own pocket to be able to make sure your small business flourishes.

I strongly believe and know that cuts in marginal rates will affect capital growth, which is so important for the growth of small

businesses in America. Secondly, the tax relief package will help the consumers, the customers of the small-business owner.

We have an issue in America right now called energy, and the energy prices are beginning to affect the purchasing patterns of the people who come to the shops such as this one. Many of the Americans have got a consumer debt load that is significant, and it is important for us to provide meaningful tax relief for all taxpayers so that they can better manage their own personal accounts.

There is a lot of talk about paying down debt. And my budget that I will submit to the Congress does pay down the national debt. But by cutting taxes on everybody who pays taxes, by recognizing a family of four earning \$50,000 a year will receive a \$2,000 tax cut, it helps people get out from underneath their own personal debt load. And that's important. It's important for the families; it's important for the small-business owners.

And finally, as Carole mentioned, part of our tax plan eliminates the death tax. Small-business owners work hard to have a financial platform from which they can not only live but also a financial platform that they can pass on to their heirs. And the death tax is unfair. The death tax is a tax that unfairly penalizes people who have worked hard to build up their own businesses.

So this tax relief package is not only good for taxpayers; it is also good to stimulate and to help the entrepreneurial spirit in America, a spirit seen right here with these good folks who have taken risk, are creating jobs, but most importantly, realized their dreams of owning their own business. So it's such an honor to be here. I appreciate your inviting us. Thank you all for your hospitality. I'll be glad to answer a few questions.

David.

**Patients' Bill of Rights**

**Q.** Mr. President, can you explain your position on a patients' bill of rights, as proposed today in the Senate? Are you for it, as it was outlined by Senators Kennedy and McCain and others?

**The President.** Well, I haven't seen all the details. But first, I am pleased that Senator